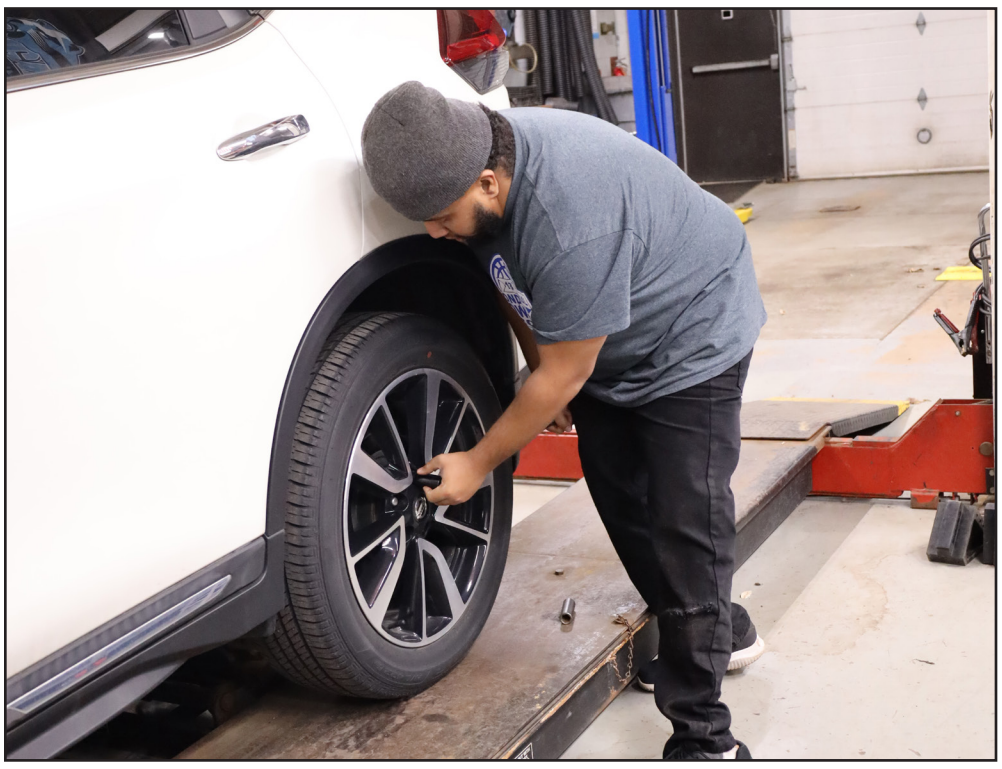
FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP HELPS STUDENT PURSUE AUTOMOTIVE CAREER



Scholarship recipient Anthony Willmore

Anthony Willmore became a double amputee at the age of two due to a birth defect. Throughout his life, the 30-year-old Kalamazoo native has tackled many tasks with drive and determination. But a tight budget almost derailed his college education. That's why he's so thankful to have received the Maxey Family Industrial Trades Scholarship. The $1,000 scholarship assisted in covering the cost of books and tuition.

Willmore took general education courses and studied multimedia design after graduation from Kalamazoo Central High School in 2011. He returned to Kalamazoo Valley in 2019 to study automotive technology. "I've always had an interest in cars," Willmore said. A relative who said, "If you love cars so much, you should enroll in the automotive program," prompted his return to college.

"I was almost at a point of dropping out," said Willmore, explaining that the expense of books, tuition, gas and class supplies was a burden for him and his family. "The scholarship gave me breathing room. It gave me relief and allowed me to continue."

In addition to being determined, Willmore has learned to be creative. "I know I'm different from other students. They use brute strength. I've had to adapt and find my way of doing things. Instead of accepting how things are, I adapt to find my way of doing it." Outside of the classroom and auto lab, he's had plenty of car maintenance experience tinkering with his project car, a 2000 BMW 3 Series. "I've enjoyed using that car to learn," he said. "It's been disassembled a dozen times."

His parents had doubts about his ability to work on cars, but Willmore has consistently demonstrated that where there's a will, there's a way. "Now they see that I'm turning a hobby into a career," he said. He considers obstacles a learning opportunity. "I like to absorb information. You never know when it will come back to you and be useful later in life," he said. "Everything is an investment. Whether it's time or money, it's going to pay off in the long run."

Willmore said his automotive instructors have all been encouraging. He's grateful to everyone who believes in him. "I'm profoundly thankful for the scholarship," he said. "It gave me hope to finish what I started. I don't forget what people have done for me. I will always be grateful for that."

It took some time for him to discover his passion, but Willmore is certain about his path now. His goal is to work in an independent auto shop or in a performance shop. "Don't give up just because you had a bad experience. Continue to experiment and find out where you fit," is his advice to others.

KALAMAZOO VALLEY RANKS NO. 1

According to state education data, the most popular college destination for class of 2023 graduates is the same for every school district in Kalamazoo County. Kalamazoo Valley Community College was, once again, the No. 1 choice in the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) service area, according to a recent MI School Data Report.

Of the college-bound students from the area, 14.1 % (317 students) picked Kalamazoo Valley. Western Michigan University was second with 8.9% (199 students), followed by Michigan State University with 7.2% (162 students). Of the 2,244 graduates, 55.5% enrolled in post-secondary education within six months of graduation.

"We are gratified that students and their families are continuing to embrace the high-quality educational programs and support services offered by Kalamazoo Valley," said College President L. Marshall Washington, Ph.D. "This top ranking comes as no surprise to us because we work diligently to make sure that the college is a great place where all students can learn, grow, thrive and find success."

MI School Data is the state of Michigan's official source for pre-K, K-12, postsecondary and workforce data to help residents, educators and policymakers make informed decisions to improve student success.

The original report was published on April 8 by Mlive.com.

APRIL IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH

Together with over 900 other community colleges across the country, Kalamazoo Valley is celebrating Community College Month during April. This monthlong campaign is an opportunity to share with the community not only that Kalamazoo Valley is the first choice of many college-bound students, but also that community colleges are first-class institutions that are vital to our local and state economies.

Community colleges are respected collaborators, leaders and partners, creating innovative and equitable opportunities to prepare learners for existing and emerging careers. For more than 58 years, Kalamazoo Valley has been at the forefront of change and at the workforce and economic development table—collaborating with local, regional and state partners, creating innovative educational and training programs that fuel the economy.

Community colleges are a uniquely American educational model that was designed to guarantee access to affordable, high-quality education for all. They serve as an on-ramp to careers and to higher-level degrees for many students, particularly for the most demographically and socioeconomically diverse students. They offer opportunity to all, right in our own backyard.

As Kalamazoo Valley Community College President L. Marshall Washington, Ph.D., has noted, "The credentials earned by our students prepare them to fill in-demand careers in healthcare, skilled and professional trades, technology and new media or for transfer to four-year institutions. Community College Month is our opportunity to remind citizens about the huge impact the college makes on the vitality of Southwest Michigan."

Kalamazoo Valley Community College
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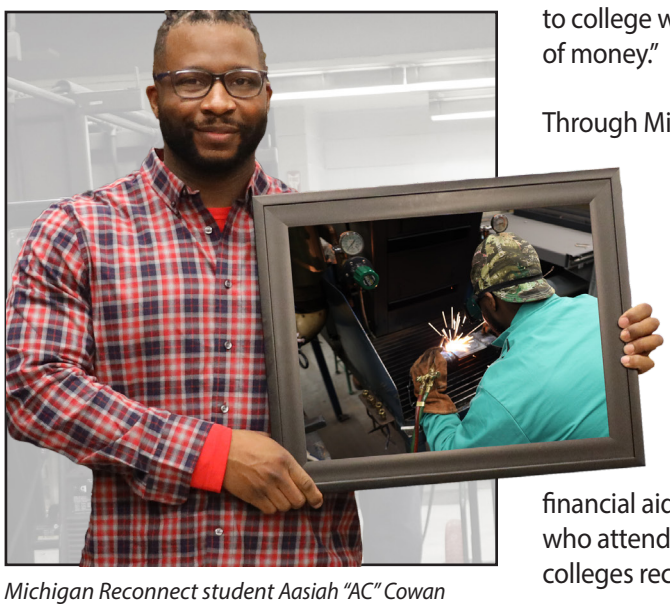
KV FOCUS

REGISTER NOW FOR SUMMER CAMPS

A Kalamazoo Valley Community College Publication - April 2024

KalamazooVALLEY community college

MICHIGAN RECONNECT HELPS STUDENT FORGE A NEW PATH



Michigan Reconnect student Aasiah "AC" Cowan

Thanks to funding from the Michigan Reconnect program and a commitment to education from his employer, Kalamazoo resident Aasiah "AC" Cowan is well on his way to gaining an associate degree in industrial mechanics.

The 38-year-old father of three has worked for the Target Distribution Center in Galesburg for the last 10 years and started classes at Kalamazoo Valley in the fall of 2021. He qualifies for free tuition through the Michigan Reconnect program.

"It's an amazing program," he said. "One thing that had always been a deterrent to me going to college was that I didn't want to owe a lot of money."

Through Michigan Reconnect, adult Michigan residents can pursue an associate degree or skills certificate tuition-free. Originally established for adults 25 and older in 2021, the program recently expanded to include ages 21 - 24. The scholarship pays the remaining balance of in-district tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied. Students who attend out-of-district community colleges receive a large tuition discount.

Cowan took advantage of the program shortly after it was announced and returned to college for the first time since 2008. "I hadn't been in school for so many years but my family is growing and I needed to start earning more," he said. "For me, Reconnect was a great opportunity to have a fresh start without having to worry about getting into a lot of debt. I knew I needed an education to make the kind of money that my family needs." His fiancé Erin Zirkle-Britt is a travel nurse and he wants his skills and earning potential to match hers.

Because his employer supports his efforts to learn and expand his capabilities, Cowan's work schedule is arranged around his classes. And while he wasn't enthusiastic about learning prior to graduating from high school in 2003, Cowan is maintaining a 3.6 GPA at Kalamazoo Valley. His welding and electrical classes enhance his abilities at work.

"People are breaking things all day at work," he said, explaining that he and his coworkers are "the glue that keeps the building together" by maintaining conveyors, motor control systems, electrical systems and more. Cowan is on track to graduate in less than a year and plans to transfer on to pursue a bachelor's degree in business. Kalamazoo Valley has given him the spark to keep learning, he said. He's enjoying the hands-on aspect of his classes.

"I'm a visual learner," he said. "I tend to learn faster when I can actually put my hands on it."

While he may have had qualms about returning to college as a full-time employee, busy father and soon-to-be husband, he is certain that he's on the right path.

"Don't give up. Stay the course," is his advice to others. "It will be worth it in the end."

For more information about Michigan Reconnect, visit **kvcc.edu/reconnect**.

REGISTER NOW

Registration for the summer and fall semesters is now open.

Summer semester classes start May 6, May 20 and June 25. Area students currently studying at a four-year institution who are looking to get ahead on required classes and save money are encouraged to apply for summer classes as a guest student.

Guest students are not alone in benefiting from summer classes. "Many of our community college students enroll in summer classes to keep pace to complete their programs in a timely manner," said Dean of Liberal Arts Billy Reynolds. "Several of our programs include opportunities to fast-forward degree completion and transfer options by including summer classes."

The fall semester begins Sept. 4. New classes include SOC 104: Sociology of Health and Illness, BIO 107: Biological Basis of Stress and MATH 155: Number and Computation.

Register now at **kvcc.edu/register**.

FREE PROGRAM OFFERS STUDENTS OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE, EARN $550

Due to overwhelming success, Kalamazoo Valley Community College is once again inviting graduating high school seniors and adult learners to a FREE three-week summer program called Valley Advantage. Students who attend can earn up to $550 for participating and – new this year – can receive a $500 scholarship if they enroll in at least three credit hours for the Fall 2024 semester at Kalamazoo Valley.

Valley Advantage focuses on what is needed to start college in the fall and is designed to help students build confidence and navigate college. The state-funded program is intended to counteract learning loss among recent high school graduates who experienced interruptions to in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A high school diploma or GED is the only requirement.

During this three-week program, students will:

- Boost their skills in reading, writing and mathematics
- Explore college resources
- Learn valuable life skills and success strategies
- Engage in team-building exercises

The Valley Advantage offers:

- Opportunity to earn up to $550
- Assistance with transportation costs (gas card/bus tokens)
- Loaner laptop computer
- Weekly Valley Food Share box
- Classroom supplies
- Breakfast or lunch each day
- Kalamazoo Valley swag
- End-of-program celebration

Program Director Louis Thomas hopes to build off last year's successes with this summer's students.

"Students gained the confidence they needed to feel comfortable taking the next steps in their educational journey. By the end of the three weeks, you could see a difference," Thomas said. "I am excited to be able to offer the program again."

This summer, four sessions are available and space is limited.

SESSION 1

July 8 - 11, July 15 - 18, July 22 - 25 and July 29
8:30 - 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 - 3:45 p.m.
Anna Whitten Hall on the downtown Arcadia Commons Campus

SESSION 2

Aug. 5 - 8, Aug. 12 - 15, Aug. 19 - 23
8:30 - 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 - 3:45 p.m.
Anna Whitten Hall on the downtown Arcadia Commons Campus

Eighty-five percent of students who participated in last summer's program enrolled in fall semester classes at the college. As part of the program, those students were assigned completion coaches who provided individualized support to help students address academic and non-academic challenges and connect with appropriate campus and community resources. Seventy-five percent of those students completed the semester with a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

These successes were highlighted in a case study on academic catch-up programs by the Michigan Community College Association. Kalamazoo Valley was one of three institutions – out of more than 30 Michigan community colleges – to be featured in the study.

Register now at **kvcc.edu/valleyadvantage**.

VALLEY ADVANTAGE Learn. Grow. Thrive.

Students from last summer's Valley Advantage

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2024 KALAMAZOO VALLEY YOUTH

SUMMER CAMPS

Looking for some summer fun? Explore Kalamazoo Valley's wide variety of youth summer camps. From athletics to hands-on learning, there's plenty to keep kids busy all summer long! Camps begin on June 17 and include sports camps like volleyball, basketball and softball, plus urban farm exploration, LEGO creation and stop motion camp, comics, manga and graphic novel camp, career exploration and more!

REGISTER NOW FOR SUMMER CAMPS

COLLEGE AND AIRPORT PARTNER ON BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

Students from landscape design class

This fall, the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport will have lush new landscaping to greet travelers as they enter and exit the terminal, courtesy of students from Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

The students, enrolled in the college's landscape design class, spent this past semester completing a site assessment, taking measurements and drafting designs, thanks to a partnership that instructor Sara Tanis, Ph.D., formed with Anton Bjorkman, deputy director of operations and maintenance for the airport.

The two met after Tanis presented about the college's recently launched sustainable horticulture program to the Downtown Development Authority in April of 2023. Through the program, students can earn an associate of applied science degree or certificate of achievement in sustainable horticulture and certificates in greenhouse management or landscape management. Tanis is the program director.

"I was looking for spaces for my students to practice in the community," Tanis explained. "It is really important for them to get that practical, hands-on experience. Anton called me shortly after the presentation indicating that he might have the space I needed."

Bjorkman saw this as the perfect opportunity to develop a new partnership in the community while supporting the airport's strategic plan that includes ensuring that the public has a positive perception of the airport property.

Tanis met with Bjorkman and Airport Director Craig Williams and surveyed the land to get a better idea of what the two envisioned for landscaping long term.

"They had some conditions," Tanis explained. "We could only use plants that were bird 'unfriendly' – no berries, no seeds, as well as nothing that attracted wildlife or grew too tall."

This, coupled with the fact that the airport lacked an irrigation system, was going to be a challenge for Tanis' students.

"I knew it would take a pretty special group of drought-tolerant plants to make it work," she said.

Tanis spent the first two weeks of the seven-week class teaching the 13 enrolled students about different plant palettes, focusing on low-maintenance, low-water varieties. The students then visited the airport to interview airport officials and to develop their own individual plans for the property. Emily Demorest was one of the students.

"They were really receptive to our questions. We were able to apply what we learned in class to determine their needs," said Demorest, a licensed social worker who decided to pursue a career in landscape design after the pandemic.

The students, Bjorkman said, also requested a tour of the airport terminal.

"They all asked really great questions," he said. "They wanted to tour the inside of the airport to try and match some of the building's interior aesthetics to their outside designs – which really impressed me."

Demorest and the rest of the class completed individual assessments and then combined all of the plans into one.

"We all had very similar themes," Demorest said. "It's a small program with great collaboration."

Collectively, the group agreed to use mostly native plants, grasses, sedges and some asters to brighten the area and add a splash of color while re-incorporating some of the existing plants – conifers, sedum, ornamental grasses and catmint.

Because there is no irrigation system, planting will not take place until September. Tanis' urban horticulture class will select the plants and install them. She anticipates a number of the same students will be involved so they can see the project through.

(l to r) Amy Ruimveld, Emily Demorest and Sarah Jones

"The students have a real sense of ownership and pride," she said. "They are very excited to be part of the community and to have family or friends fly in and out of the airport and know that they had a part in making it beautiful."

Future classes will be responsible for the upkeep of the airport landscaping.

"It's an ongoing project and partnership," Tanis said.

Bjorkman is looking forward to the long-term relationship with the college.

"It's an amazing fit and mutually beneficial partnership," he said. "It will reduce some of the maintenance and upkeep for our staff, who are responsible for maintaining the airfield grounds, while allowing the students to master their skills."

Enrollment for the summer and fall semesters at Kalamazoo Valley is now open. Summer classes start May 6, May 20 and June 25. Fall semester begins Sept. 4.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE Kalamazoo VALLEY Museum

FREE SUMMER FUN AT THE KALAMAZOO VALLEY MUSEUM

CURRENT AND UPCOMING EXHIBITS

Check out these offerings at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, located at 230 N. Rose St. in downtown Kalamazoo. Admission is free to the exhibits and the museum. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, from noon to 4 p.m. The museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Visit **kalamazoomuseum.org** for more details.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A HOMETOWN WRITER

NOW - JUNE 30 2024

Nationally acclaimed author and Comstock Township native Bonnie Jo Campbell shares her history and writing inspirations in a mini exhibit.

Designed by the Kalamazoo Valley Museum

SKIN: LIVING ARMOR, EVOLVING IDENTITY

NOW - JUNE 2, 2024

Explore the shape-shifting, color-changing and adaptable nature of skin and the technological innovations it inspires.

Created by the California Academy of Sciences and modified for travel and distribution by the Science Museum of Minnesota

KALAMAZOO STATE HOSPITAL: 165 YEARS OF PSYCHIATRIC CARE

NOW - JAN. 19, 2025

Learn about the fascinating history of the patients, employees and buildings on the Oakland Drive campus of Michigan's longest-operating mental hospital.

Created by the Kalamazoo Valley Museum

THE QUESTIONEERS: READ. QUESTION. THINK. PLAY!

JUNE 15 - SEPT. 1, 2024

Questions are posed, challenges identified and problem-solving begins in this traveling exhibit from The DuPage Children's Museum.

Created by DuPage Children's Museum. "The Questioneers" by Andrea Beaty. Illustrations by ©David Roberts. "The Questioneers" is a registered trademark owned by Adams

MYSTERY AND BENEVOLENCE: MASONIC & ODD FELLOWS

SEPT. 28, 2024 - JAN. 5, 2025

Eighty carvings, sculptures, textiles and regalia bring to light the histories, symbolism and values of the Masons and Independent Order of the Odd Fellows.

Organized by International Arts and Artists (IA&A) and The American Folk Art Museum, New York

FREE SUMMER COOKING CLASSES FOR MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS

Rainbow Pizza

Spinach Quesadillas with Cowboy Caviar

Revamped Ramen

Kalamazoo Valley Community College is offering a free virtual cooking program called *The Learning Kitchen* this summer to culinary-curious middle school students. The six-week course is an experiential culinary and nutrition education program that teaches students how to prepare nutritious, budget-friendly meals, develop healthy eating habits and have fun while learning to cook. The Learning Kitchen was developed by Hunger Free Vermont to educate youth to plan and prepare healthy meals and snacks on a limited budget.

The Learning Kitchen is made possible by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) funding through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Michigan Fitness Foundation. SNAP-Ed is an education program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that teaches people eligible for SNAP how to live healthier lives.

Classes are held via Zoom and led by Dietitian Corrine Bieber-Peak, RD., and Kalamazoo Valley Community Culinary and Nutrition Program Coordinator and Chef Lizzie Luchsinger.

"Students will learn how to prepare delicious meals featuring affordable fruits and vegetables that support their health and well-being," said Bieber-Peak. "In addition to gaining experience in the kitchen, students will learn about their local food system, local farmers and food producers who provide ingredients for the recipes."

Recipe ingredients are provided by regional farmers and suppliers at ValleyHUB, an urban farm, food hub and education center at Kalamazoo Valley's Food Innovation Center. Ingredients can be picked up the day before each class from Kalamazoo Valley's Marilyn J. Schlack Culinary and Allied Health Building in downtown Kalamazoo.

"The Learning Kitchen is a fun, interactive program that gives students the skills to increase their confidence and independence in the kitchen," said Luchsinger. "It is also a great way to inspire students to make healthier food choices for life."

Students have the option to select late afternoon or evening sessions:

Thursdays | July 18 - Aug. 22 | 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Thursdays | July 18 - Aug. 22 | 6 - 7 p.m.

The Learning Kitchen Menu:

- Week One Theme: More Produce Please
  Rainbow Pizza
- Week Two Theme: Go-To Grains
  Tuscan Pasta
- Week Three Theme: Strong and Healthy
  Garden Grilled Cheese and Kale Chips
- Week Four Theme: Shopping and Planning
  Spinach Quesadillas with Cowboy Caviar
- Week Five Theme: Grocery Store "Tour"
  Revamped Ramen
- Week Six Theme: Putting it All Together
  Black Bean Enchiladas

To enroll in The Learning Kitchen, eligible students must be entering grades 6 - 8 and committed to attending a minimum of five of six weekly classes.

This project was funded in whole or in part by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Michigan Fitness Foundation. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

For additional information, email mluchsinger@kvcc.edu.

SCAN TO REGISTER

HUMPHREY PRODUCTS INVESTS IN EMPLOYEES THROUGH VALLEY

When in need of quality workforce development opportunities, Kalamazoo-based manufacturer Humphrey Products turns to Kalamazoo Valley Community College to invest in the next generation of the company's trained workforce. The partnership has been a valuable investment for navigating the changing labor market and for training newer and current employees in the wake of the retirement of the company's experienced workforce.

"The college has been a big help in furthering training at all levels of the company," said Kevin DeLancey, Humphrey Products production trainer and continuous improvement coordinator. "The classes I've taken have developed my leadership skills and aid the continuous improvement component of my career."

The Going PRO Talent Fund offered through the state of Michigan is a resource that Humphrey Products utilizes to provide employees with training offered by the college. The funds are awarded to employers in need of developing, training and retaining newly hired and current employees. Funding is offered for short-term training that leads to industry recognized transferable credentials, such as the corporate training classes offered at the Groves Campus.

Kalamazoo Valley offers an array of corporate training opportunities, including certification exam prep, team building, leadership, management and human resources courses. Other training opportunities include software, mechatronics, mechanical, maintenance, safety, technical and computer options. Training can also be customized to suit the needs of each organization.

"Our demand-driven workforce development training means that each day is different," said Maddie Isch, Kalamazoo Valley associate director of corporate training. "We like to tell our customers, 'You name it, we build it,' and we really mean that. We can create anything a business or community organization might need to reach their goals."

As a fifth-generation member of her family's business, Humphrey Products Senior HR Coordinator Mallory Humphrey has also benefited from the courses offered by the college. Humphrey credits the training for providing skills needed for her recent promotion.

"The HR Certification Prep course has helped me gain new knowledge and skills and has helped me network with other like-minded professionals," Humphrey said. "It's helped me build confidence in my career. I take a lot of pride in what I do and I'm excited to see where it goes."

(l to r) Mallory Humphrey, Jesse Sellers and Kevin DeLancey

Machine tool operators, such as machinist Jesse Sellers, also benefit from the college through Humphrey Products' apprenticeship program. Sellers, who is on track to graduate with his journeyman certificate in April, is receiving valuable training paid for by his employer.

"Differentiating between what sort of knowledge is generally applicable to machining as a whole, versus what's more specialized, has been invaluable when applying myself at work," Sellers said. "It boils down to critical thinking, troubleshooting the task at hand and considering how to apply what I've learned in the past, at work and at school."

Humphrey Products also offers a tuition reimbursement program that pays for employees' college credit courses. DeLancey participates in the program and plans to graduate from Kalamazoo Valley in December 2025 with an associate degree in business administration.

"I'm gaining knowledge that I'm applying every day in my career," DeLancey explained. "Whether that's applying what I'm learning to reports or documentation. It's also helped improve my writing skills as I construct training plans for our employees."

Machinist and Kalamazoo Valley student Jesse Sellers

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING EVENT SET FOR SEPT. 26

The 2024 Opportunities for Education Scholarship Fundraising event takes place Thursday, Sept. 26 at 5:30 p.m. at Kalamazoo Valley's Food Innovation Center, 224 E. Crosstown Parkway in downtown Kalamazoo.

The event features dishes from popular area restaurants, along with creations by student and faculty chefs. Guests will enjoy a tasting tour under a large tent where they can sample signature dishes and beer, wine and other beverages.

This student scholarship fundraiser helps the KVCC Foundation provide scholarships for students with financial needs. Political science and sociology major Valerie Walls is an honors program student who received a scholarship to cover college expenses. "The cost of college is one thing I don't have to worry about. I can focus on my grades," she said.

For tickets and sponsorship details, visit www.kvcc.edu/foundation or contact KVCC Foundation Executive Director Alisha Siebers at asiebers@kvcc.edu or 269.488.4821.